

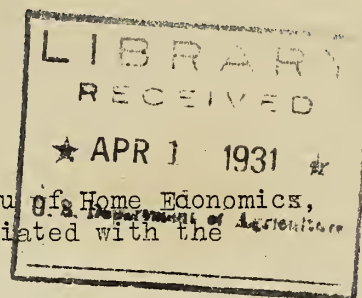
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119
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THE HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

A radio talk by Mrs. Rowena Schmidt Carpenter, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered through Station WRC and 40 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, March 5, 1931.



How do you do, Homemakers!

Some of you who have written us for help in budgeting your income have failed to give us your address. We are holding your letters, one from San Antonio, Texas, one from Staten Island, and others. The information we have for you is too detailed to broadcast so if you aren't sure you sent us your address as well as the amount of your income and the number in your family, you had better write us again.

It has been quite a while since I have said anything about children, but to day they are pretty much on my mind because of something that happened to me last week. A friend of mine walked into the Bureau and said: "Mrs. Carpenter, do you think it is necessary for a child to have three different and distinct sets of furniture while he is growing up, and then a fourth set for the rest of his life? First a baby crib, with sides, then a small bed, perhaps with low sides, then a medium-sized bed, and finally one of adult proportions". She was excited as she continued: "I know families that are buying just that way, and each time the child progresses to a larger bed he has to have a new chest of drawers and other pieces of furniture to match. It seems so unnecessary and extravagant to me and aside from that I don't see what becomes of all of this furniture in the smaller houses and apartments so many people live in these days."

Recalling what my friend said about bedroom furniture for children, I took a turn through the children's section of a furniture store the other day, and I went out feeling there was reason for her to be excited. So much is on display to tempt extravagant and indulgent parents, that it is no wonder if they can scarcely wait until the little tots grow a few inches and seem therefore to deserve a new set of equipment. Of course, growth does make its demands, but what are they?

Perhaps you remember we talked briefly about this last November at the time of the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection. The child does have specific needs in furniture, equipment, and in a place to use them, at each stage of his development. Let's stick to the bedroom. The tiny baby sleeping most of the time needs first of all a suitable bed, a crib with four high sides, one of which lets down. It must have a good mattress, and very strong springs that will not curve with the weight of his body while his bones are growing firm. If this crib is wisely chosen, that is if it is large and strong enough, there is no reason why another bed is needed until the child

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can learn to get in and out of bed alone, and sleep quietly without rolling onto the floor. When he is that grown-up his second bed may as well be three-quarters size, attractive in design, and good in construction so that it will last throughout childhood.

There are arguments for a greater variety of bed sizes, and in some cases they are worth considering. For instance, a large clothes basket, rectangular in shape, may be equipped for the baby's crib during his first few months. Smaller sized bedding needed for it reduces the job of laundering so much that it really pays for itself. A simple basket bed of this kind is handy for sunbaths outside, and for car or train trips. There is an argument too for a bed of intermediate proportions, to be used for a time by one child after another as several small children in the family are growing out of babyhood.

And there's the matter of a chest of drawers or a dresser for the storage of the child's belongings. It isn't necessary to buy a small white or ivory colored wardrobe for the baby's things, but it is necessary to have some special place to keep them. Perhaps the best way may be to get a small sized chest that the child will learn to know as his. That may help him have pride in getting out and putting away the things he wears when he is learning to be independent. But of course the same may be accomplished by turning over the lower drawer of a full sized dresser to him. So it is really just a matter of seeing that he has his own place from the beginning.

From early childhood he needs a small chair or two. When he is big enough to use it, a desk or a table for his work and his play can be added, and a chest or box for toys. And larger chairs to fit his size, being sure to give him a comfortable one for reading and lounging. Starting with the essentials and adding a piece of furniture or equipment as the need for it arises, seems to me a better way than buying set after set of things that are soon outgrown.

And it was in this way I answered my troubled friend. But it isn't possible to lay down a rule that fits all families. It is better for us who are parents to keep the needs of our own family clearly in mind, and to build up certain standards of quality by which we make our selection.

Goodbye, Homemakers, until next Thursday!